

Docket No. UG-181053 - Vol. II

**Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission v.
Northwest Natural Gas**

July 16, 2019



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BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND)
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,)
)
Complainant,)
)
vs.) DOCKET UG-181053
)
NORTHWEST NATURAL GAS,)
d/b/a NW NATURAL,)
)
Respondent.)

PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING - VOLUME II

PAGES 12-19

July 16, 2019

6:00 p.m.

Vancouver Water Resource Education Center
4600 Southeast Columbia Way
Vancouver, Washington 98661

Melanie P. Boelow, CCR
Court Reporter

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Commissioner of the Washington and Transportation
Commission:

JAY BALASBAS
Washington Utilities and
Transportation Commission
621 Woodland Square Loop SE
Lacey, Washington 98503
(360) 664-1132

1 VANCOUVER, WASHINGTON; TUESDAY, JULY 16, 2019

2 6:00 p.m.

3 * * *

4 P R O C E E D I N G S

5 MR. BALASBAS: Good evening. I am Jay
6 Balasbas, Commissioner for the Washington Utilities
7 and Transportation Commission. This is the public
8 comment hearing for the general rate case Northwest
9 Natural filed with the Commission on December 31,
10 2018.

11 Today is July 16th, 2019, and this is
12 Docket UG-181053 before the Washington Utilities &
13 Transportation Commission.

14 I am here to listen to customers affected by
15 the rate case. Before I hear from you, I will spend a
16 a few minutes describing the company's request, and
17 the current status of the case. Then, I will ask any
18 members of the public that wish to comment, to come
19 forward.

20 Also, we have a court reporter here taking
21 down what is said in the hearing tonight. What you
22 say will be included in the record of the case.

23 The Commission is comprised of three members,
24 myself, Chairman Dave Danner, and Commissioner Ann
25 Rendahl. We are holding one public hearing in this

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1 case.

2 It is the Commission's practice to conduct
3 public comment hearing in certain cases with a single
4 commissioner. My colleagues who are not present will
5 read the transcript of this public hearing and will
6 consider any public comments made.

7 The Commission is a state agency that
8 regulates the rates and services of investor-owned
9 utilities in Washington. Because of the natural gas
10 services Northwest Natural provides are essential
11 services, and because they are not subject to the same
12 kind of competition as other services in our
13 community, the Commission regulates them to ensure
14 that the rates they charge customers are fair, just,
15 reasonable, and sufficient.

16 What that means, is that the rates should be
17 no higher than necessary for the company to be able to
18 provide services that it offers in a safe and reliable
19 way. That the rates are sufficient for the company to
20 meet its expenses and obligations and provide the
21 company's investors an opportunity to earn a
22 reasonable return on their investment.

23 Briefly, to summarize the current status of
24 the case, Northwest Natural and other parties have
25 presented two settlement agreements to the Commission.

1 One, is an all party, partial settlement agreement,
2 and the other is a multiparty partial settlement
3 agreement.

4 The Commission is scheduled to hold an
5 evidentiary hearing to examine the proposed
6 settlements and hear testimony and evidence presented
7 by the parties on August 14th, 2019. The Commission
8 must make its decision by the end of November of 2019.

9 There is a handout available that is prepared
10 by the Office of Public Counsel. The Office of Public
11 Counsel represents your interests in our proceedings.
12 That handout has a synopsis of what the company
13 requested in its rate case, a summary of the all party
14 partial settlement agreement, and the position that
15 Public Counsel has taken in the case.

16 There is a representative in the audience
17 here from the Office of Public Counsel, and also
18 representatives from the company.

19 If you have questions for the company, or
20 Public Counsel, please talk with them after the
21 hearing tonight.

22 The Commissions regulatory staff operates as
23 an independent party in cases such as this one. They
24 review the company's case, just like Public Counsel
25 and other parties, and participate in the case as a

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1 party and advocate positions.

2 The three commissioners sit as judges in
3 these proceedings, and during the proceeding, may not
4 discuss the merits of the case with our regulatory
5 staff, unless other parties of the case are present.

6 And as I mentioned the information about
7 Northwest Natural's original rate case request and the
8 proposed settlement agreements, are summarized well in
9 the Public Counsel handout.

10 The company has requested an increase in
11 revenue of \$8.3 million, or a 12.6 percent increase in
12 rates. The company also requested an increase to the
13 basic charge from \$7 per month to \$9 per month. The
14 all party partial settlement agreement, would increase
15 revenues by \$5.1 million, or 7.8 percent, and the
16 monthly basic charge for residential rates
17 schedule two, would increase to \$8 per month.

18 I know I have talked a lot and I am hear to
19 listen to any member of the public, and this point, I
20 would like to invite any members of the public who
21 wish to provide comments about this proceeding to come
22 forward.

23 All right. As there are no persons wishing
24 to comment tonight, if anyone does wish to make
25 comments that they'd like to share, there are still

1 ways to provide comments to the Commission. Written
2 comments can be provided to the Commission by the
3 close of the evidentiary hearing on or around
4 August 14th. Instructions for how to do so, are on
5 the back of the Public Counsel handout.

6 Seeing no other business before the
7 Commission tonight, we are adjourned.

8 (Adjourned at 6:34 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF WASHINGTON)
) ss.
COUNTY OF CLARK)

I, Melanie P. Boelow, a Certified Court Reporter in and for the State of Washington, do hereby certify that the foregoing transcript is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge, skill and ability.

MELANIE P. BOELOW
Certified Court Reporter
Certificate Number 3122